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Chapter 2

Moral Psychology and Cultivating the Self

Curie Virág

Introduction

The revival of the early Confucian ethical tradition by Zhu Xi and his neo-Confucian predecessors was a movement to reinstate moral self-realization as the proper goal of human life.¹ Zhu sought to restore what he regarded as the true Way of antiquity, in which the most important of human aspirations was to fulfill one's potential to grasp and embody the normative patterns of the cosmos, and to actualize them in one's conduct. Like the ancients before him, Zhu was conscious of living in an era of moral decline—an era whose downward trajectory was to be traced back to the very founding of empire, when scholars stopped concerning themselves with right understanding and right living, and instead devoted themselves to scholastic exegesis and to the mastery of textual content. Zhu's ethical project was to promote what he regarded as the true and proper way to live, which was to fulfill the potentiality that human beings shared with the creative forces of Heaven and earth. Such personal fulfillment necessarily involved engaging in activity that contributed to the betterment of society, and to the flourishing of all under Heaven.

¹ This chapter was completed with generous support from the European Research Council under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (grant agreement no. 726371). For a fuller discussion of self-cultivation in the ethics of Zhu Xi and in neo-Confucianism more generally, see "Self-cultivation as *Praxis* in Song Neo-Confucianism," in Virág 2014.

Although Zhu Xi's ethical vision and program were, at some basic level, a continuation of the early Confucian concern with moral self-perfection, there was much that was new. For one thing, Zhu provided an account of cosmic and human phenomena that was far more elaborate than anything articulated by the early Confucians. It explained the diverse profusion of things in the world in terms of the dynamic engagement of pattern-principle (*li* 理) and *qi* 氣, and offered a coherent and systematic picture of the order and workings of the cosmos. It also contained a more nuanced account of the psychological workings of the human being that explained how the nature (*xing* 性), the heart-mind (*xin* 心), and the feelings (*qing* 情) were integrated with one another. Zhu also gave a more conceptually developed, naturalistic explanation of human moral capacity and self-cultivation. With these theoretical endeavors, Zhu achieved more than a "synthesis" of the various cosmological and ethical ideas forwarded by his Northern Song neo-Confucian predecessors: he was also enacting the very human potential to embody and experience the patterned workings of the cosmos itself. It was by conceptualizing and embodying the all-pervading pattern-principle of things in the world that one achieved integrity and unity in one's own person, thereby fully realizing one's humanity.

Zhu's theoretical and practical projects were thus interdependent, and assumed significance and meaning in relation to each other. On the theoretical side, intellection was at the forefront of self-cultivation practice—a fact that is evident in how Zhu Xi explains the enterprise of learning and reading books. For Zhu, arriving at a coherent and meaningful understanding of the text was crucial to learning and to personal realization: it was through the process of apprehending the pattern-principle of the text that one could realize the normative condition of one's self. Not insignificantly, the heart-mind, as Zhu Xi repeatedly pointed out, was a faculty whose characteristic activity was to unite and organize the entire

person. At the same time, the achievement of an integrated life through self-cultivation proceeded not only from the conceptual apprehension of intelligible wholes but also through the experiential dimensions of self-cultivation practice, and through an emphasis on sensory and affective engagement.²

In view of the complex engagement of conceptual and practical dimensions in Zhu Xi's approach to self-cultivation, the passages presented in this chapter cover wide-ranging topics and genres, including essays, commentaries on the classics, and records of conversations with students. They include discussions of the basic categories of traditional moral psychology (such as the nature, the heart-mind, the feelings and desires), in which Zhu responded to his students' requests to clarify, develop, and justify his conceptions. They also cover Zhu's approach to learning (*xue* 學). Conceived as a matter of exhaustively investigating pattern-principle (*qiong li* 窮理), learning was not a matter of apprehending what was external to one's person, but about achieving a resonance between oneself and the object of one's investigations. This entailed such practices as maintaining tranquility (*jing* 靜), being in a state of reverential attention (*jing* 敬), and sitting in meditation (*jing zuo* 靜坐). It also involved training oneself to keep one's heart-mind open (*xuxin* 虛心) and to preserve the heart-mind (*zunxin* 存心)—exercises that enabled one to achieve a proper state of heightened engagement with oneself, with one's surroundings, and with the objects of one's attention. Such efforts, Zhu emphasized, were not about physically escaping from the world and finding solace in the absence of affairs, but were meant to enable the individual to

² On the conception and significance of emotions in Zhu Xi's ethical theory, see Virág 2007.

achieve mastery in the face of things and events, and to respond calmly and appropriately to them.

Zhu's approach to self-cultivation as an endeavor to achieve a coherent cognitive grasp of the true nature of things, and a deep, affective engagement with the objects of one's concern, is perhaps best exemplified in his method of reading (*dushufa* 讀書法).³ Zhu's account of proper reading places primary emphasis on having the right attitude and commitment to the enterprise. It also stresses the importance of arousing and animating the senses and of bringing the body in alignment with the activity of reading. In order for the text to become fully "one's own" and not merely an entity external to one's self, one must engage with it physically, as it were—be it through recitation, which allowed one's body to perform the words, or through imaginatively "entering" the text. In such ways, one dissolved the boundary between oneself and the text, and awakened the normative pattern-principles that one shared with the rest of the cosmos.

Translation

1. It was asked, "Is it the case that first there was pattern-principle, and then afterwards there was *qi*?"

Zhu Xi replied, "Pattern-principle and *qi* cannot, fundamentally, be spoken of in terms of before and after. But when we proceed to make inferences [about things],⁴ then it would seem that first there is pattern-principle and then afterwards there is *qi*. . . .

³ Editor's note: See Chapter 4, "Poetry, Literature, Textual Study, and Hermeneutics," in this volume for more on Zhu Xi's views on reading and literature.

⁴ On the significance of inference in Zhu Xi's thought, see Meng 2016, 278–279.

He was asked about the Dao itself and its operation (*yong* 用).”⁵

Zhu Xi replied, “If we imagine the ears as the thing itself, then hearing is its operation; if we consider the eyes as the thing itself, then seeing is its operation.” (ZZYL, Chapter 1, p. 3)

2. It was asked, “The natures of humans and things have a single source, so why are there differences among them?”

Zhu Xi replied, “With respect to the nature of humans, we speak of brightness and dimness; with respect to the nature of things, there is just unevenness and blockage. What is dim can be made bright but what is already uneven and blocked cannot be made clear and penetrating.

In the words of Hengqu 橫渠 (Zhang Zai 張載, 1020–1077),⁶ ‘Among things there is none that does not possess this nature, but it is on account of their penetrability and dimness, openness and blockage, that we can distinguish between humans and things.’ And in the

⁵ I occasionally translate *yong* 用 as “operation” rather than as “function,” the standard rendering followed in this volume, since Zhu seems to be referring to something like the broader practical unfolding of something, rather than its specific and predetermined function.

⁶ Zhang Zai 張載 was an eleventh-century neo-Confucian thinker whose ideas were of central importance for Zhu Xi. Among other things, Zhang Zai provided the conceptual foundation for understanding all phenomena, both cosmic and human, in terms of the shared, underlying reality of *qi*. Zhang thus argued that, beneath the diversity of all things in the world was a single, integrated unity.

concluding lines [of this quotation], he says ‘If the blockage is solid, it cannot be cleared; if it is thick, it can be cleared but clearing it is difficult; and if it is thin, it is easy to clear.’”⁷

It was also asked, “If one habitually does what is not good, and one becomes deeply steeped in [such habits], then in the end he will not be able to recover [his original condition].”

Zhu Xi replied, “If the force of this tendency is very severe, then one cannot reverse it; but it also depends on how shallow or deep one’s understanding is, and how much effort one makes.” (ZZYL, Chapter 4, p. 57)

3. That by which human beings come into being is none other than the union of pattern-principle and *qi*. The pattern-principle of Heaven is indeed vast and inexhaustible, but if it weren’t for *qi*, then even if there were pattern-principle, there would be nothing to collect around it. Thus, it is necessary that the two kinds of *qi* (*yin* and *yang*) mix and interact with one another so that they congeal and collect together; afterwards pattern-principle has something to attach itself to. That all human beings are able to speak, act, think, and engage in projects is all *qi*, but pattern-principle is present within. . . . [T]he substance of those of the highest intelligence and those who are born understanding is *qi* that is clear and unadulterated, without a trace of dimness or turbidity.⁸ This is

⁷ Zhu Xi 1936, chapter 1, p. 28.

⁸ *Analects* 16.9: “Confucius said, ‘Those who are born understanding it are the best; those who come to understand it through learning are second. Those who find it difficult to understand and yet persist in their learning comes next. People who find it difficult to understand but do not even try to learn are the worst of all.’” (Translation adapted from Slingerland 2003, 196.)

why being born understanding and conducting oneself with ease are not abilities that one acquires through learning. This was the case with Yao and Shun. Next is a level second to being born understanding, in which one can only achieve understanding through learning, and can only arrive at it by putting it into practice. Still the next level is when the material endowment is imbalanced, and is also obscured. In this case one must exert considerable effort: “What others do once, do a hundred times; what others do ten times, do a thousand times.”⁹ Only then can one reach the level that is second to being born understanding. If one proceeds without stopping, then one’s achievements will be the same (as those who are born understanding). (ZZYL, Chapter 4, pp. 65–66)

4. The nature itself cannot be described. The reason why we can speak of the nature as being good is that, by looking at the goodness of alarm and concern, deference and yielding, and the other [virtues] among the four beginnings, you can see that the nature is good. This is like when you see the clarity of flowing water: you know that the source of the water must be clear. The four beginnings are the feelings, and the nature is pattern-principle. When they are manifest, they are feelings, but at their root they are the nature. This is like when you look at a shadow and see the form. (ZZYL, Chapter 5, p. 89)
5. The object of awareness is the heart-mind’s pattern-principle. The capacity for awareness is the wondrous efficacy (*ling* 靈) of *qi*. (ZZYL, Chapter 5, p. 85)

⁹ An abbreviated reference to a passage in chapter 22 of the *Doctrine of the Mean*, with some of the characters omitted.

6. The heart-mind is master (*zhu* 主) of the nature and operates through the feelings.

Therefore, it is said, “Before happiness and anger, sorrow and delight are manifest, it is called ‘balanced’ (*zhong* 中) and when they are all manifest and hit their proper measure, it is called ‘harmonious’ (*he* 和).”¹⁰ The heart-mind is the realm in which this endeavor takes place. (*ZZYL*, Chapter 5, p. 94)

7. Explicating the word “heart-mind,” he said, “One word will cover it—life-production.” [The *Great Treatise* commentary of the *Classic of Changes* says,] “The great potency (*de* 德) of Heaven and Earth is to produce.”¹¹ Human beings are born having received the *qi* of Heaven and Earth. Therefore, the heart-mind must be humane, and if it is humane, then it produces. (*ZZYL*, chapter 5, p. 85)

8. The heart-mind is *qi* that is refined and luminous. (*ZZYL*, chapter 5, p. 85)

9. The heart-mind refers to a master.¹² In movement and in stillness there is always a master; it is not the case that it does not operate in a state of stillness, and that

¹⁰ *Doctrine of the Mean* 1.4; see Chapter 9 of this volume.

¹¹ *Classic of Changes*, “Great Treatise” (*Xici* 繫辭) commentary, Part 1, chapter 2.

¹² I translate *zhu zai* 主宰 here and throughout this chapter simply as “master” rather than “master-governor,” the standard rendering followed in this volume. In this and many other passages, Zhu Xi often seems to be specifically interested in the way that the heart-mind serves as an organizing, unifying force, rather than its ability to rule over or control the self.

only in a state of movement is there is a master. When I speak of a master, I mean that there is a seamless order that is naturally present within. The heart-mind unites and joins together the nature and feelings. But this does not mean that it is a raw, undifferentiated mass together with the nature and the feelings, with there being no differentiation. (ZZYL, chapter 5, p. 94)

10. As I have discussed before, the heart-mind's capacious luminousness and consciousness are one and the same. But if we may distinguish between the human heart-mind and the heart-mind of the Way,¹³ the former arises from the self-centeredness of the *qi* of the physical body, while the latter originates from the correctness of the nature and mandate, and this is why, in terms of their awareness, they are not the same. For this reason, while the former is precarious and unstable, the latter is mysterious and difficult to perceive. Nevertheless, among human beings, none fail to possess a physical form, and therefore, even those of the highest wisdom cannot but possess a human heart-mind; moreover, none fail to possess a nature, and so, even those of the lowest intelligence cannot but possess the heart-mind of the Way. The two are mingled in the square inch [of the heart-mind], and if one does not know which is the one that rules it, then that which is precarious will be even more precarious, and that which is mysterious will be even more mysterious. Then,

Elsewhere, Zhu suggests something stronger by referring to the controlling activity of heart-mind, and I consider “master” to be sufficient for covering both of these senses.

¹³ See the “Counsels of the Great Yu” chapter of the *Book of Documents*, “The human heart-mind is precarious, the heart-mind of the Way is subtle; be refined, be single-minded; hold fast to the mean (*zhong* 中).”

the public-orientedness of Heavenly pattern-principle will ultimately have no way to overcome the self-centeredness of human desire. If you are focused and refined, then you will carefully examine the two and not mix them up. If you are single-minded, then you will protect the correctness of your original heart-mind and not depart from it. If you pursue your affairs from this perspective, and do not desist for even a moment, then inevitably the heart-mind of the Way will become the master of your person, and your human heart-mind will in every instance obey the mandate. Then that which is precarious will be stable, and that which is mysterious will be manifest. And in activity and tranquility (*dong jing* 動靜), and in one's speech and conduct, one will naturally avoid erring on the side of either excess or deficiency.

(Preface to the commentary on the *Doctrine of the Mean*. ZZWJ,¹⁴ chapter 76, p. 3828)

11. Capacious luminousness is originally how the heart-mind is in itself; it is not that I am able to make it capacious. As for the seeing and hearing of the eyes and ears, that by which they see and hear is the heart-mind. How can there be forms and images [preexisting] within it? Nevertheless, when the eyes and ears see and hear them, then there are also forms and images in it. As for the capacious luminousness of the heart-mind, how can there be things preexisting within it? (ZZYL, chapter 5, p. 87)

¹⁴ ZZWJ refers to *The Collected Writings of Master Zhu* (Zhuzi Wenji 朱子文集). See Zhu Xi

12. He was asked about the statement [in the *Doctrine of the Mean*], “The state before the feelings of happiness, anger, sorrow and delight have become manifest is called ‘balance’ (*zhong* 中).”

Zhu Xi replied, “Happiness, anger, sorrow and delight can be compared to east, west, south and north: when they do not incline in a particular direction, they are in a state of balance.”

He was also asked about the meaning of “harmony.”

Zhu Xi replied, “This is just the suitable happiness, the suitable anger. If, in a given situation, one ought to be five parts happy but one is seven or eight parts happy, then it exceeds what is appropriate; if one is three or four parts happy, then it does not reach what is appropriate.” (ZZYL, chapter 62, p. 1516)

13. He was asked about the difference between the state before happiness, anger, sorrow, and delight were manifest and the state after they were manifest.

Zhu Xi replied, “During the time before they are manifest, they have no form or appearance that is visible, but after they are manifest, they are visible. It is similar to when you see a child about to fall into a well, and you have feelings of alarm and concern.¹⁵ In that case, it is apparent that one has humaneness inside oneself. If you see an act of trespassing, and you have the heart-mind of shame and disdain, in that case, it is apparent that one has rightness inside oneself.¹⁶ Since the heart-mind of alarm and concern belongs to humaneness, it must be that humaneness lies within, and thus in becoming manifest it produces feelings of alarm and concern. Since the heart-mind of shame and disdain belongs to rightness, it must be that rightness lies within; and thus in becoming manifest it produces the heart-mind of shame and disdain. We can compare it to the eyes pertaining to the liver, or the ears pertaining to the

¹⁵ *Mencius* 2A6.

¹⁶ *Mencius* 7B31.

kidneys. If your vision is not clear or if you are hard of hearing, then it must be the case that your liver or kidneys are diseased; if your vision is clear and your sense of hearing is acute, then it must be the case that the *qi* of your liver and kidneys is without defects before you can be like this. Nevertheless, if humaneness does not have the heart-mind of alarm and concern, it is just love. If rightness does not have the heart-mind of shame and disdain, it is just judgment. Only if one first has these (i.e., a heart-mind of alarm and concern or of shame and disdain) within will one be moved and respond, and then they will naturally become manifest.” (ZZYL, chapter 53, pp. 1288–1289)

14. The nature is the state before movement, and the feelings are the state after movement. The heart-mind encompasses both the states before and after movement. Now, the heart-mind, before it has been set into motion, is the nature, and after it has been set into motion, is the feelings. This is what is meant by “the heart-mind unites the nature and the feelings.”¹⁷ Desires are what issue forth from the feelings. The heart-mind is like water; the nature is like the stillness of water; the feelings are like the flowing of water; and desires are like waves. But there are good waves and bad waves. Good desires are as in cases like “I desire to be humane.”¹⁸ Bad ones are those that come forth and rush headlong towards something, like great, tumultuous waves. For the most part, bad desires destroy and reject Heavenly pattern-principle. Like a river overflowing, there is nothing they do not harm. When Mencius said that

¹⁷ This statement is from Zhang Zai and is quoted on many occasions by Zhu Xi. See Zhang 2001, Coda, Part 1, pp. 1a–3b.

¹⁸ *Analects* 7.30.

the feelings could be considered good,¹⁹ he meant proper feelings. Those that flowed out from the nature originally possessed nothing that was not good. (ZZYL, chapter 5, pp. 93–94)

15. It was asked, “Were the sages anxious to not show their anger?”

Zhu Xi replied, “How could they go through life without showing their anger? When it was proper for them to be angry, it always showed on their faces. If one must punish someone for his crimes and deliberately smiles, this is wrong.”

It was asked, “If that is so, were they anxious about becoming enraged?”

Zhu Xi replied, “When Heaven is angry, there is the rumbling of thunder. When Shun punished the ‘four villains,’²⁰ he must have been angry at the time. If one is angry when one should be angry, he is behaving in a balanced and appropriate manner. When the incident has passed, this anger dissipates, and what is more it does not accumulate inside.” (ZZYL, chapter 95, p. 2445)

¹⁹ Mencius 6A6.

²⁰ The “four villains” (*si xiong* 四凶) refer to ancient mythological figures representing harmful, malevolent forces that were banished by the legendary sage-ruler Shun 舜 to restore peace and order to the realm. There are different versions of this tale in Warring States and Han texts, many of which appear in the context of early flood myths. One of the earliest accounts is that found in the *Commentary of Zuo* (*Zuo Zhuan* 左傳), where the four villains are wicked sons whose expulsion to the four cardinal directions marks the ruler’s endeavor to establish the foundations of his authority by constructing orderly space around the center (Wen year 18). On the motif of the punishment of the four villains, see Lewis 2006, 72–76.

16. If one has this nature, it will be expressed in these feelings. By way of these feelings, one sees this nature. Based on one having these feelings today, one can see that originally there was this nature. (ZZYL, chapter 5, p. 89)

17. Renfu 仁父²¹ asked about the statement, “Humaneness is the pattern-principle of love.”

Zhu Xi replied, “This statement can only be clarified if you consider it from the point of view of the heart-mind, nature, and feelings. There is a master that is naturally mingled within the self. This is the heart-mind. There being humaneness, rightness, ritual propriety, and wisdom—this is the nature. Its issuing forth as alarm and concern, shame and disdain, deference and yielding, and approbation and disapproval—these are the feelings. Alarm and concern is love, and it is the beginning of humaneness. Humaneness is the thing itself, love is its operation.” He also said, “In the phrase, ‘the pattern-principle of love,’ love emanates from humaneness. But you cannot discuss humaneness separately from love.” (ZZYL, chapter 20, p. 464).

18. He was asked about the nature, the feelings, the heart-mind, and humaneness.

Zhu Xi replied, “Master Hengqu [Zhang Zai] spoke of it most excellently, saying, ‘The heart-mind unites the nature and feelings.’ Mencius said, ‘The heart-mind of alarm and concern is the beginning of humaneness, and the heart-mind of shame and disdain is the beginning of rightness.’ This ultimately states that the heart-mind, feelings and the nature are all good. The heart-mind has nothing that is not good. What the heart-mind issues forth are the feelings, and sometimes there is that which is not good. Thus, to say that what is not good is not the heart-mind is to miss the point. Although the heart-mind in itself is originally completely

²¹ Courtesy name of Xu Rong 徐容, Zhu Xi’s disciple.

good, the fact that when it is in operation there are things that are not good is due to the fact that the feelings are swayed by things. “Nature” is the all-encompassing name for pattern-principle, and humaneness, rightness, ritual propriety, and wisdom are terms for individual pattern-principles that lie within the nature. Alarm and concern, shame and disdain, deference and yielding, and approbation and disapproval are terms for what feelings issue forth. These feelings are what emanate from the nature and are thus good. The issuing forth of these beginnings is most subtle, and they all emanate from the heart-mind, and therefore [Zhang Zai] said: ‘The heart-mind unites the feelings and the nature.’” (ZZYL, chapter 5, p. 92)

19. “The heart-mind unites the nature and feelings.” It is “still and unmoving”²² and the pattern-principles of humaneness, rightness, ritual propriety, and wisdom are all contained within it. When it is in a state of movement, it is the feelings. It has been said that the condition of stillness is the nature and the condition of movement is the heart-mind. But this takes one thing and splits it into two. The heart-mind and the nature cannot be explained in terms of the distinction between movement and stillness. Everything possesses a heart-mind and the space within this heart-mind must be empty [*xu* 虚]. This is like when you take a dish containing chicken hearts or pig hearts: you can see [that they are empty] if you cut into them. The human heart-mind is also like this. But this empty place still encompasses and stores the many pattern-principles of the Way (*dao li* 道理), fills Heaven and Earth, and embraces past and present. Extending this even further, it covers Heaven and Earth, and there is nothing that does not come from this. This is the reason why the human heart-mind is

²² *Classic of Changes*, “Great Treatise” commentary Part 1, Chapter 7.

such a marvelous thing! The pattern-principles that reside in the heart-mind are called “the nature.” The nature is like the heart-mind’s field: it fills the space within, and there is nothing but these pattern-principles within it. The heart-mind is the dwelling place of the spirit-like intelligence, and constitutes the master of the entire person.²³ The nature is then the many pattern-principles of the Way; these are received from Heaven and fully contained in the heart-mind. When they issue forth as wisdom, knowledge, recollection, and contemplation, they are all feelings. Therefore, [Zhang Zai] said, “The heart-mind unites the nature and feelings.” (ZZYL, chapter 98, p. 2514)

²³ Cf. *Xunzi* Chapter 21: “The heart-mind is the ruler of the body (*xing zhi jun* 形之君) and the master of the spirit-like intelligence [*shen ming* 神明].” Adapted from Hutton 2014, 227. The account of the heart-mind in Chapter 21 also makes recurring reference to its “emptiness [*xu* 虛],” which is a quality that Zhu Xi emphasizes in this passage.

20. It was asked, “What Yanzi learned²⁴ is that when human beings are born, a nature endowed with the five constants²⁵ is mixed within their heart-minds. Before they have been stirred by things, they are simply still and unmoving. But they cannot avoid being stirred by things, and therefore happiness, anger, sorrow, delight, and the rest of the seven feelings emerge. Having already become manifest, it is easy for them to get carried away, and the nature begins to get damaged. And so, what Yanzi learned was to make this pattern-principle clear and bright, and he took as his imperative to restrain his feelings so that they accord with what is within, and to resolutely overcome his self-centeredness. Once self-centered desires are done away with, Heavenly pattern-principles will naturally reveal themselves. Therefore, when the heart-mind is receptive and still, when stirred it will respond accordingly. Sometimes it will be angry at something; it will be angry at what is appropriate to be angry about, but the self is not involved in this. As soon as the anger has passed, the heart-mind will return to a state of stillness; how could there be any transferring [of one’s

²⁴ *Analects* 6.3. “What Yanzi learned” refers to the kind of learning represented by Yan Hui, the favored disciple of Confucius. Zhou Dunyi singled out Yan Hui as living in accordance with the goal of moral self-perfection as the true and proper aim of individuals. Cheng Yi continued to promote this learning in his essay, “Discussion of What Yanzi Loved to Learn” (*Yanzi suo hao he xue lun* 顏子所好何學論). On the cult of Yan Hui, see Hon 2005, 85.

²⁵ The five constant virtues of humaneness (*ren* 仁), rightness (*yi* 義), ritual propriety (*li* 禮), wisdom (*zhi* 智), and trustworthiness (*xin* 信).

anger]?²⁶ When we talk about making mistakes, it is merely that something is slightly off. Zhang Zai called it “dissatisfaction within oneself;” that is, roughly, some small things that one is dissatisfied about in one’s heart-mind. If, as soon as one is aware of them, one immediately sets about removing them, and moreover, ensures that they will not sprout again. If the effort one makes to learn is like this, then we can say that one truly loves learning.”

Zhu Xi replied, “What is called ‘learning’ is learning this, and nothing more. What Cheng Yi called ‘Aligning the feelings with the nature,’ what the *Great Learning* referred to as ‘Illuminating bright virtue,’ and what the *Doctrine of the Mean* called ‘Heaven’s mandate is called the nature’ is all about this pattern-principle.” (ZZYL, chapter 30, p. 776)

21. As for the efforts made by students, I only worry that they fail to grasp what is essential. But if they strive to investigate the pattern-principles of the Way, things will naturally settle into their place, and become integrated into an all-encompassing unity so that each thing will have its own differentiated order (*tiaoli* 條理). But if they don’t do this, then in all matters they will face

²⁶ *Analects* 6.3 reads:

Duke Ai asked, “Who among your disciples might be said to love learning?”

Kongzi answered, “There was one named Yan Hui who loved learning. He never misdirected his anger, and never made the same mistake twice. Unfortunately, his allotted lifespan was short, and he has passed away. Now that he is gone, there are none who really love learning—at least, I have yet to hear of one.” (Slingerland, Op. cit.)

I follow Slingerland’s rendering of *qian yi* 遷移 as “misdirect.”

obstructions and obstacles. Students are constantly engaged in discussion, speaking frequently about “holding on to it (*cao shou* 操守)”²⁷ without having grasped what is essential, so they do not know what they should be holding onto. They talk about “extending and filling it out,” of “experiencing it personally,” and of “nurturing it,” but this is all just about finding nice words for making conversation. It will work only if they apply effort in actual affairs. The idea that one must understand at the fundamental level is motivated by the same point. (ZZYL, chapter 8, p. 130)

22. In antiquity, children entered the school of Lesser Learning at a young age, and were only instructed in practical matters, ranging from ritual, music, archery, charioteering, calligraphy, and mathematics, to the cultivation of filiality and fraternal respect, devotedness and trustworthiness. At the age of sixteen or seventeen, they entered the school of Greater Learning, and from then on were instructed in matters pertaining to pattern-principle, from “the extension of knowledge” and “the investigation of things” to what constitutes devotedness, trustworthiness, filiality, and fraternal respect. (ZZYL, chapter 7, p. 124)

23. Lesser Learning concerns the realm of affairs, such as serving one’s ruler, serving one’s father, serving one’s elder brother, and comportment towards one’s friends. It only provides instruction about acting in accordance with models of conduct. Higher learning elucidates the pattern-principles underlying such affairs. (ZZYL, chapter 7, p. 125)

²⁷ Following Daniel Gardner’s rendering of *cao shou* 操守 in Gardner 1990.

24. A single heart-mind is fully endowed with the myriad pattern-principles. Only if you are able to preserve the heart-mind can you exhaustively investigate pattern-principle. (ZZYL, chapter 9, p. 154)
25. For exhaustively investigating pattern-principle, what is fundamental is to open one's heart-mind and quiet one's thoughts. (ZZYL, chapter 9, p. 155)
26. Pattern-principle is not a separate thing in front of us; instead, it resides in our heart-minds. Only if people directly experience how it truly resides within them will the situation be acceptable. It is like what the practitioners of inner alchemy refer to as “lead and mercury, dragon and tiger.” These are all things that reside in one's body, not outside of it.²⁸ (ZZYL, chapter 9, p. 155)
27. Replying to Hengqu (Zhang Zai)'s question regarding the idea that “in calming the nature one cannot but be engaged in activity (*dong* 動),”²⁹ Mingdao

²⁸ The inner alchemists invoked the traditional ingredients used in outer alchemy (*waidan* 外丹)—a practice devoted to the production of elixirs that promised longevity or immortality.

Lead and mercury were the most important of these ingredients, and were identified with the forces of *yang* and *yin* (denoted by the dragon and tiger), respectively. The inner alchemists eschewed the use of external substances in favor of methods of physical and mental cultivation that were understood as mirroring the workings of the cosmos.

²⁹ <IBT>Cheng Mingdao (Cheng Hao), “Letter in Reply to Master Hengqu Regarding Calming the Nature (*Da Hengqu xiansheng ding xing shu* 答恆渠先生定性書),” in Cheng Yi and Cheng Hao 1999, Chapter 2, p. 1a<IB/T>. This passage also appears in *A Record for Reflection*; see Zhu Xi 1936, Chapter 2, p. 34.

(Cheng Hao)'s idea was that one should neither loathe things and affairs, nor should one pursue them. Now, if people loathe things, they would completely cut themselves off from them, and if they pursue them, they would be enticed and driven by them. Only if one neither resists them nor drifts along with them, but responds freely and completely appropriately can one achieve goodness. Now, in Hengqu's conception, one has to cut oneself off from the realm of external things and achieve calmness within, while Mingdao thought it was necessary to harmonize and join together inner and outer, saying that "there is calmness in motion and there is calmness in stillness,"³⁰ and that, when responding to things, one will naturally not be bound by things. If one can be calm only when one is still, then when one is engaged in activity, I'm afraid that they will be tempted and carried away by things. (ZZYL, chapter 95, p. 2442)

28. It was asked, "It seems that maintaining tranquility (*jing* 靜) is something we must apply ourselves to."

Zhu Xi replied, "Although it is said that one should maintain tranquility, this doesn't mean that we should abandon affairs and things in order to pursue tranquility. Since we are human beings, we must demonstrate service to our ruler and kin, interact with our friends, comfort our wives and children, and attend to our servants. We cannot completely abandon these obligations, close our doors and engage in quiet sitting, and when things and affairs arrive, fail to respond and manage them, saying, "Wait until I go and do some quiet sitting. I don't need to respond." Nor can we simply go off in blind pursuit of things and affairs. Between these two extremes, only if there is thoughtful resoluteness can it work . . . When things and

³⁰ Ibid.

affairs arrive, if one does not respond to them in accordance with pattern-principle, then although one may sit like a lump and not interact with things, the heart-mind will not achieve tranquility. Only if, in a state of activity, one is able to accord with pattern-principle, then can one achieve tranquility in times when there are no affairs. If one can preserve and nurture this stillness, then in this state of responding to and managing things, one begins to achieve efficacy. In times of activity one must exert oneself; in times of tranquility one must exert oneself. (ZZYL, chapter 45, p. 1161)

29. Reverential attention is none other than the heart-mind serving as the master.

(ZZYL, chapter 12, p. 210)

30. Reverential attention isn't just sitting around. Whenever you pick up your feet and set about going somewhere, this heart-mind should always be in such a state of mind. (ZZYL, chapter 12, p. 211)

31. Reverential attention isn't just sitting there like a lump of earth, with the ears not hearing, the eyes not seeing, and the heart-mind not thinking, and then calling that reverential attention. It is just being in a state of awe and respect toward something, and not daring to be without restraint or discipline. If one is like this, then one will be restrained in one's body and heart-mind, as though one were in awe of something. If one is constantly like this, then the state of one's *qi* will naturally become differentiated [from other states]. If you preserve this heart-mind, then you can engage in learning. (ZZYL, chapter 12, p. 211)

32. In undertaking the task of learning, one must practice quiet sitting (*jing zuo* 靜坐).

If you practice quiet sitting, then your inner foundation will be settled. Even if you cannot avoid pursuing things, you will have a place where you can be tranquil when you come around. You can compare it to a person being comfortable living at home; if he goes out and then returns, he feels at ease. If

things outside are hectic but one has never put in the effort [of practicing quiet sitting] and then wants to collect oneself in the inside, one will not have a place to settle down. (ZZYL, chapter 12, p. 217)

33. He was asked about [Confucius's statement], "Hold fast to it, and then it will be preserved."³¹

Zhu Xi replied, "The heart-mind isn't a dead thing; one should look at it as a living thing. Otherwise, it will be like the Buddhists entering the realm of stillness and practicing Chan meditation. Holding fast to it and preserving it is just when you respond to affairs and manage things; if everything is in accordance with pattern-principle, then it is preserved. If the way you deal with things isn't proper, then in that case the heart-mind isn't present. If you only pay attention to maintaining a state of calm here, and then suddenly some matter comes before you, your holding fast will be dispersed; this is [what Confucius spoke of as] 'Let it go and you will lose it.'"³²

Zhongsì³³ asked, "What about the time before you respond to affairs or manage things?"

Zhu Xi replied, "Before you respond to affairs or manage things, you should maintain a state of vigilance and caution, and that is all."

He was further asked, "If one is in a state of vigilance and caution, in that case is this is to hold on to it?"

³¹ <IBT>Statement by Confucius quoted in *Mencius* 6A8</IB>.

³² Ibid.

³³ Courtesy name of Chen Jingzhou 陳景周 (d. 1229), who passed the presented scholar examination in 1220.

Zhu Xi replied, “It is also necessary to hold on to it, but you do not need to stubbornly hold it there. Only teach it to wake up, and then you will hold fast to it. You don’t need to restrain yourself like a lump of clay. (ZZYL, chapter 59, p. 1400)

34. If your heart-mind is not preserved, your entire person will not have a master.
(ZZYL, chapter 12, p. 199)

35. For one who is bright, the [heart-mind] is simply bright. As for the others, they have to nurture it. Nurturing isn’t like toiling away with hammer and chisel. If you just keep the heart-mind open and tranquil, eventually it will become bright on its own. (ZZYL, chapter 12, p. 204)

36. About these two lines, “The extension of knowledge resides in nurturing it; for nurturing knowledge nothing surpasses lessening desire”³⁴: the extension of knowledge means pushing your knowing to its fullest extent and perfecting it. One who wishes to extend one’s knowledge must first be able to nurture his knowledge. If you are able to nurture it, then your perceptions will be increasingly clear, and what you grasp will be increasingly solid. If you wish to nurture your knowledge, all you have to do is lessen your desires, and that is all. If your desires are lessened, then you will not be disturbed by mixed-up things, and your knowing will become ever more clear; if you are not afflicted by vicissitudes, what you grasp will become ever more solid. (ZZYL, chapter 18, p. 405)

³⁴ This passage appears in *Questions on the Great Learning* (*Daxue huowen* 大學或問), in

37. Jingzhi³⁵ asked, ““For nurturing the heart-mind, nothing is better than lessening desires.”³⁶ In this phrase, ‘nurturing the heart-mind’ is none other than keeping [one’s heart-mind] in a state of balance and openness.”

Zhu Xi replied, “This is certainly right. When you want the many things that are in front of you, your heart-mind rushes headlong towards all these things. [Lessening desires] is not about a total absence [of desire], it is just about reducing them so that one can gradually preserve one’s heart-mind. If you covet many things, you want this and you also want that. One need not be talking about things that are corrupt or bad; if there are things in front of you that you desire greatly, then your original heart-mind (*ben xin*

本心) will be thrown into confusion. . . . Human beings only have one heart-mind, so how can we divide it up into many parts? If we keep applying our heart-minds to useless things, when we encounter situations where we ought to apply it, we will not have the strength to deal with them. (ZZYL, chapter 61, p. 1475)

38. It is necessary for students to establish their will.³⁷ That people these days are going about it so casually is because they have never regarded learning as an enterprise. When they encounter situations, they deal with them in a haphazard and ad hoc way. This is simply because their wills aren’t established. (ZZYL, chapter 8, p. 134)

39. You mustn’t wait. (ZZYL, chapter 8, p. 135)

³⁵ Courtesy name of Zhu Zai 朱在 (1169–1239), the third son of Zhu Xi.

³⁶ *Mencius* 7B35.

³⁷ *Analects* 2.4.

40. Students today are completely uneager [to learn].³⁸ (ZZYL, chapter 8, p. 135)
41. In making an effort, people nowadays are never willing to start. Everyone wants to wait. So, for instance, if they have something to do this morning, but not in the afternoon, they say they could start in the afternoon; if they have something to do in the afternoon, then they say they could start in the evening. But they will be sure to wait until tomorrow. If there still remain a few days left in the month, it is certain they will wait until the next month; if there still remain a few months left in the year, they will not make an effort, invariably saying, "There is hardly any time left in the year, so we have to wait until next year." When they are like this, how will they make any progress? (ZZYL, chapter 8, p. 135)
42. In learning, we should first establish the main structure, and then come back to the interior to build the walls and take care of the fine details. People nowadays often set about building individual rooms before they understand the bigger project, so they rarely complete their work. (ZZYL, chapter 8, p. 130)
43. You mustn't be dependent on teachers or friends. (ZZYL, chapter 8, p. 135)
44. In learning, do not complain that there is no one to analyze things for you. You must go inside it yourself and carefully make an effort. You have to see things for yourself. (ZZYL, chapter 8, p. 136)
45. You must polish and refine your mental energy so as to pursue understanding. The matters of the world cannot be understood in a state of relaxed leisure. (ZZYL, chapter 8, p. 138)

³⁸ *Analects* 7.19.

46. The gate for entering the Way is for you to put yourself personally into the realm of the pattern-principle of the Way, becoming gradually intimate with it, and eventually becoming one with it. But nowadays, the path for entering the pattern-principle of the Way lies here, while people stand out there, with the two having nothing to do with each other at all. (ZZYL, chapter 8, p. 140)
47. Broad learning refers to the pattern-principle of Heaven and Earth and the myriad things, and to the method of cultivating oneself and governing others. These are all things that one should learn. Still, there is a proper sequence and order, and you have to prioritize that which is important and urgent. [Learning] can't be confused and disunified. (ZZYL, chapter 8, p. 142)
48. It is like climbing a mountain. Most people want to get to the highest point, but don't know the pattern-principle whereby if you do not proceed from understanding the lower points, you will never reach the higher points. (ZZYL, chapter 8, p. 142)
49. As for the words of the sages and worthies, we must constantly pass them before our eyes, roll them around in our mouths, and circulate them through our heart-mind. (ZZYL, chapter 10, p. 162)
50. There is value in a book only in its recitation.³⁹ If you recite it often, you will naturally achieve understanding. Now, even if we ponder it deeply and write it

³⁹ In this passage, I translate *du* 讀 as “recitation” rather than as “reading,” which is the other common rendering of this term. In Zhu Xi's time, and in late imperial China more generally, the most frequently used terms for reading, *du* 讀 and *song* 誦, referred specifically to the act of reading aloud. Here, and in other passages addressing the method of reading, Zhu Xi

down on paper, this doesn't help matters, since in the end it is not really ours. There is value only in its recitation. I don't know how it is that the heart-mind naturally harmonizes with the *qi*, becomes so buoyant and vitalized, and naturally comes to remember things so securely. Even if you read the text to the point of familiarity, and contemplate it in your heart-mind, it is still not as good as recitation. If you recite it over and over again, then before long what you didn't understand you come to understand, and what you understand becomes even more meaningful. If you do not recite the text to the point of familiarity, then it really does not become so meaningful. But I have not yet spoken about the recitation of commentaries, but only reciting with intimate familiarity the original classics. Whether you are moving or at rest, sitting or lying down, if your heart-mind always dwells [on the recitation of the classics], then naturally you will achieve understanding. Having thought about it, I think that recitation *is* what it means to learn. (ZZYL, chapter 10, p. 170)

51. If the heart-mind isn't settled, it cannot grasp pattern-principle. Now if you wish to read books, you must first settle your heart-mind, and make it like still water, or like a bright mirror. How can a dirty mirror reflect things? (ZZYL, chapter 11, p. 177)

52. When reading books, you cannot simply seek the moral significance of the text from what's on the page. You must turn around and consider it from your own

emphasizes the physical activity of reading texts out loud so as to engage one's entire body and senses. This reflects Zhu Xi's conviction that being one with the text meant physically embodying and enacting it, not just in internalizing its content. It also suggests Zhu Xi's resistance to a growing tendency in his own time towards the practice of silent reading.

self as the reference point. Since the time of the Qin and Han periods, there was nobody who discussed this; all they did was to go and look for it in the text, and did not try to understand it for themselves. You have not yet understood that the previous words of the sages reside there [within yourself]. Only if you avail yourself of these words and come to investigate it in yourself can you begin to grasp it. (ZZYL, chapter 11, p. 181)

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